

Protection From Unsafe Products and Trade Policy

When I go to a store and buy a product, I look for the country where that item was produced before buying. I don’t think I’m alone in this. Unsafe products are flooding the United States from countries where consumer safety laws are either completely ignored or don’t exist in the first place. I find it disturbing that we are allowing these products into our country, in particular from countries like China, where the government actually executed the head of their Food and Drug Administration due to contaminated products.

This Legislative Session, we’ll be dealing with proper warnings for consumers about the country of origin. Fundamentally, I must say I am also deeply concerned about the percentage of goods consumed in the U.S. that we are importing from abroad which used to be manufactured here by American workers. Americans who had good living wage jobs. This off-shoring and outsourcing of American jobs is deeply disturbing. Everything from agricultural products, and now unfortunately even airplane parts, are being either imported from, or outsourced to countries where environmental, work place safety, and consumer protection laws rarely exist.

As a member of the Joint Legislative Committee on Trade Oversight Policy, I have rolled up my sleeves and am working with other legislators to reverse these ill-conceived and detrimental federal policies.

Smarter growth will help fix traffic gridlock

Much has been said and written about transportation, and a lot of it is senseless rhetoric. I firmly believe that we cannot have a serious discussion on transportation without talking about out-of-control growth with no infrastructure in place first. No matter what we do, it will not be enough if we build new homes faster than we can build roads. These two issues profoundly affect each other. Everyone wins when we have roads in place before we allow new homes to be built. Cities and counties must understand that the State of Washington cannot solve the problem of transportation if they continue to allow development to far outpace our ability to fund and build new roads. I will continue to bring folks to the table so we can work on this together.

Veterans

It is a travesty to see our brave men and women, who have made great sacrifices on our behalf return to an unprepared and uncaring federal administration. Last session, we improved the situations of our returning veterans, including employment protection, education and tax relief. As the federal government does less, there is more Washington must do to help those who have given so much.

As a member of the Joint Legislative Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs, I have been meeting with local veterans’ groups, constituents, and the Washington State Military Department. We need to support our soldiers when they return home. The rates of suicide, substance abuse, divorce, mental illness and homelessness are unacceptable. Washington State will do better for our soldiers. What kind of Americans are we if we fail in this?

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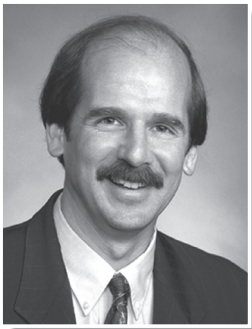
2008 EARLY
SESSION REPORT

Christopher
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2008 EARLY SESSION REPORT

Dear Neighbor,

I’m pleased to be writing you again and hope your summer, fall and holiday season went well. Having retired from law enforcement last year after 25 years, I finally had the opportunity to spend more time working issues for our district, individual citizens and public policy matters for Washington. After the long Legislative Session, it was nice to come home each night to my family.

Although a very productive time, the summer held challenges for me, too, as my son Andrew returned to Afghanistan for his third tour of combat in the Middle East, my daughter was married and one of my best friends was killed in a plane crash. Life is an interesting journey. As the Legislature returns to Session, I would like to reiterate that I am honored by the trust you have placed in me to represent you in the Washington State Legislature.

While I always appreciate the kind words of support I receive from constituents, I find an equal amount of satisfaction in the dissenting views as well. All feedback I receive from constituents is valuable, and I have learned much. Your thoughts and ideas are what I am here to represent. To best represent you, I need to hear from you. Contact me at the numbers or addresses listed below.

Although attuned to the needs of citizens, which must be provided for in our system of self-government, the framers of our Constitution were even more concerned that elected representatives should be the first line of defense for those citizens against government should it intrude upon their rights or privacy. I am ever mindful of this duty as well.

The job is not always easy, and in a democracy it is impossible to satisfy everyone’s interest on every issue. I welcome the challenge and it is my sincere desire that no matter the outcome on any particular issue, you feel that I have made every effort to listen to your concerns and ideas, and in the end that you would feel well represented. If you’re ever in Olympia, please come by my office to say hi or have a cup of coffee — it’s always a pleasure to see folks from back home during session.

Sincerely,

Christopher Hurst • State Representative, 31st Legislative District



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Christopher
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Special Session Victory for Taxpayers

I promised you that one of my top priorities would be to re-enact the 1% property tax cap voters approved under I-747 in 2001. As I thought might happen, the Supreme Court on November 8th, invalidated I-747 and the 1% property tax cap. The Gov-

ernor called a Special Session and I had the honor of being the prime sponsor of the bill that fully reenacted I-747 as it was passed by voters. This is now permanently the law.

What’s more, my bill eliminated *all* of the \$188,721,193 in banked taxing capacity created by the Supreme Court decision. Anyone saying we did not fully eliminate this banked capacity is not telling the truth and is misleading the voters. There is a small amount of banked taxing authority that existed *prior* to 2001 which has been on the books for years, and has almost never been used. Currently, Pierce County, Edgewood, Sumner, Bonney Lake, Buckley, Auburn and Enumclaw have *no* banked capacity at all. King County and Wilkeson have virtually none. This is not a threat to 31st District citizens.

Still, the Legislature needs to look at comprehensive tax reform. Homeowners need additional relief due to skyrocketing housing prices and increased valuations. This coming Session, I will continue working with lawmakers – Republicans and Democrats – to reduce the property tax burden on working families and senior citizens.

Summertime Projects

Aside from the challenges outlined in my opening statement, for the most part, this summer and fall were an opportunity to talk with folks in the district about things that mattered to them. I have stated many times that an important duty as your state representative is to protect you from kooky ideas that get hatched in Olympia. I also find that almost all of the good legislative ideas that I have brought forward and seen enacted into law came from citizens.

Like you, I went to the gas pumps and found that I was paying more than \$3 a gallon for gas. Like you, I read the news and found that my household, like yours, and every other household in the entire United States, now owes over \$20,000 for the war in Iraq, and that our national debt is the highest it’s ever been. Like you, I started looking at the labels of food and products I was buying to see if they came from China. If you own a home, we both looked at our property tax statements and wondered if, as housing prices declined, the county would be as eager in reducing our taxes as they were raising them when valuations were going up.

I guess what I’m saying is that most people I talked to were more concerned about our economic future than being attacked by a terrorist when they got into their car and drove to work. It seems our country entered an era of almost unparalleled political divisiveness and fear. For some years now, it is like our leaders

wanted us to live in fear and trade our constitutionally protected freedoms for security. Yet I believe that as Americans, we find security in rejecting the politics of fear. We are an industrious and resourceful people who can only fail as a nation if we succumb to those who would have us cower before the threats of an uncertain future. The future is always uncertain, and will become what *we* as Americans make it.

I spent my summer talking with people, listening to ideas, and watching world and national events unfold. People are ready to move on and not be told how to think or feel.

Lake Tapps Update

You may or may not live on Lake Tapps, but it is an extraordinary public resource. After 8 long years, we are finally entering the end game of a complex and frustrating process. The final sale of the Lake Tapps Project will be completed in early 2008. The conversion of the water right from hydro-electric production to consumption, recreation, and the protection of fish, will be issued by the Department of Ecology soon. This will be great news, if done properly. The collaborative process, and all those who have worked so hard over the years should take great pride in what their hard work has accomplished. It has been my pleasure to work with everyone, but in particular representatives of the Homeowner’s Associations on Lake Tapps, local cities and Pierce County Councilman Shawn Bunney. We are almost there, but will not let our guard down in the final stage.

Protecting Communities: Sex-Offenders and Gangs

Most know of the tragic events surrounding Zina Linnick’s death. This case made parents worry about their own children. Are they safe? I know from my experience as a police detective for 25 years, and the commander of a 15-city homicide and violent crimes task force that we will never end all crime. But as a Legislator, it is now my duty to use that experience to make sure that our laws are sharply refined and effective. This Session, we will improve our laws dealing with sex offenders. A court decision last summer will allow us to go back and collect DNA samples from anyone who has *ever* committed a sex crime in the past.

We will change the rules of evidence so that when a rapist is on trial, the jury will be allowed to hear evidence of other sexual assaults. Until now, such evidence was usually kept from a jury. The Governor has ordered the GPS monitoring of a large number of sex offenders. We will tighten up the system of sex offender registration and increase penalties for violators. I will see laws passed that work in the courtroom.

I was appointed Chairman of a legislative committee which developed legislation to deal with the growing number of gang members and their associated violence, now being seen in communities throughout the state. It will address prevention, intervention, and suppression as a coordinated approach to, in the short-term, bring gang members to justice for their criminal behaviors, but in the long run, seek to reduce the number of individuals joining and staying in gangs. This ultimately reduces the cost to taxpayers.

2008 EARLY SESSION REPORT

Frustrated by the Supreme Court

Several Supreme Court decisions in recent years have upset citizens in Washington, like striking down I-747. Some advocated the removal of justices from the Court. Although I too was unhappy with that decision, I also appreciate the justices being willing to risk handing down unpopular decisions to uphold the Constitution. After the court’s ruling, it was easy for the Legislature to reenact the will of the people in a *lawful* way. It was not the intent of the court to overrule the will of citizens, but rather to invalidate an initiative that was so poorly written that it violated *our* Constitution.

Without an independent and properly functioning judiciary, there is no balance of power. These checks and balances, although inconvenient at times, are our first and only defense against tyranny, and demonstrate that our system works.

Emergency Preparedness

For the second straight year, we have seen catastrophic storms which paralyzed portions of our state. As Vice Chair of the Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Committee, I have met this summer with groups, individuals, and government entities to seek ways to improve our ability to respond to disasters.

Three issues for this Legislative Session are the stock piling of vaccines for pandemic flu, significant improvements to radio interoperability so emergency first responders can easily communicate with each other, and changes to the Washington State Military Department to facilitate coordination between the National Guard and local jurisdictions *prior* to disasters.

Constitutionally Protected Rainy Day Fund

Last Session, we put in place a constitutionally protected rainy day fund, and sent it to the voters. In November, the voters affirmed our proposal by a margin of 67%, supporting this measure of fiscal responsibility.

Voters Back Legislature, Not Insurers

During the Legislative Session I told you about important consumer protection legislation we passed regarding the relationship between consumers and insurance companies. I co-sponsored this legislation that was passed into law. It required insurance companies to deal with their customers in good faith when they make claims on their policies.

The insurance companies put Referendum 67 on the ballot to overturn the work we did on your behalf. Last November, the voters overwhelmingly, and in almost every single county, sided with the legislators who passed this bill, and against the insurance companies who were trying to take away this important consumer protection from citizens. Consumers who pay their insurance premiums have a right to fair and timely claims processing when they have a loss or catastrophic event. No one should be victimized twice. It’s important to note that not all insurance companies treat their customers and policy holders this way, and it’s unfortunate that the actions of some insurers made it necessary to take this step to protect consumers.